United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1575
3 February 1994

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Inaugural meeting of Somali Aid Coordination Body, meeting in Nairobi this week, agrees to measures to better coordinate international rehabilitation efforts in Somalia.

+ Admiral Jonathan Howe, Special Representative and Chief of UNOSOM II, might be leaving that position; Ambassador Lansana Kouyate, currently his Deputy, would serve in his stead until replacement is found.

+ FAO, in annual report, warns of growing water shortage and escalating competition and conflict over water usage; says scarcity and misuse of freshwater pose serious threat to sustainable development.

+ Countering press reports, Special Representative issues statement saying UNPROFOR has no conclusive evidence that Yugoslav Army personnel have been crossing border into Bosnia and Herzegovina.

* * *

The inaugural meeting of the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB), which met in Nairobi on Tuesday and Wednesday, agreed to a number of measures to bring about closer coordination of international rehabilitation efforts in Somalia. Formed in response to the Declaration of the United Nations Fourth Humanitarian Conference on Somalia, held in Addis Ababa late last year, the group is also mandated to identify means of involving Somalis and their organizations in its efforts. The membership includes major bilateral and multilateral donors, United Nations agencies and non-governmental groups. Regional organizations will also be participating.

The SACB endorsed the Plan of Action, produced after the Addis Ababa meeting, reconfirming that international rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance will be provided to those areas of Somalia which are able to achieve sufficient levels of peace and security to allow long-term donor involvement. The participants discussed plans for missions by donors to those regions, and agreed to plan for emergency needs that might arise. They also agreed that the United Nations Development Office, currently housed within the

(more)

United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) should be transferred to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

* * *

Admiral Jonathan Howe, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), might soon be leaving that position. A United Nations spokesman said at Headquarters today that in that event, until a replacement was found for Admiral Howe, Ambassador Lansana Kouyate of Guinea would serve as Acting Special Representative in Somalia.

Mr. Kouyate has been the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Somalia since last year, and in March 1993 he chaired the Conference on National Reconciliation in Somalia. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced on Tuesday he was appointing him Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Political Affairs.

* * *

Warning of intensified competition and potential conflict over the use of water, the annual report of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) yesterday labelled freshwater "an increasingly scarce and valuable resource". The State of Food and Agriculture 1993 said the growing shortage of water and misuse of freshwater posed serious threat to sustainable development, adding that competition among agriculture, industry and cities for limited water supplies was already constraining development efforts in many countries.

Over the next 30 years, the report predicted, 80 per cent of the additional food needed to feed the world would have to come from irrigated agriculture, just as cities and industries demanded more of the increasingly scarce supplies. However, FAO noted that higher water prices should encourage farmers to use water more efficiently, while promoting water-saving technologies. Today, despite "huge investments and subsidies", as much as 60 per cent of the water diverted or pumped for irrigation was wasted. Several countries were trying to cut wastage through administrative reform policies and investment in irrigation management, but the report recommended that they also establish a structure of pricing incentives, restrictions and penalties to encourage greater efficiency in water use.

* * *

Reacting to press reports of increasing numbers of Yugoslav Army soldiers being sighted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and quotes to that effect from a member of the Norwegian Battalion of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), a statement was issued today by a spokesman for Yasushi Akashi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the former Yugoslavia. The statement said that "the remark made by Lieutenant Jantora Strandus -- who is serving with UNPROFOR's Norgwegian medical unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina -- does not represent in any way the position of UNPROFOR. The fact of the matter is that UNPROFOR has no conclusive evidence that the Yugoslav Army has been crossing the border into Bosnia-Herzegovina."

In a separate development, the Croatian Government responded to a report by UNPROFOR that an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 personnel of its regular army were currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Secretary-General had conveyed that information in a letter to the Security Council dated 2 February (S/1994/109). In a letter to the Council, also dated 2 February (S/1994/110), the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations said that his Government did not deny that there were regular Croatian Army troops in the border area between the Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said they were stationed there in accordance with a Joint Agreement signed by the two countries in July 1992, and said that to reposition those troops would seriously undermine Croatia's territorial integrity and security. His Government, he continued, was concerned about the welfare of ethnic Croat citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, given that the Council could not protect them, had no moral right to prevent Croatian volunteers from helping them.

* *** *